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ABSTRACT

Prior studies suggest that sex-role stereotypes influence responses to Horner's fear of success cue. This study investigates stereotypes about both sex roles and achievement settings. One hundred sixty college males and females wrote stories to different cues, then rated the masculinity-femininity of their story characters. Both "John and "Anne" are rated more "masculine" as medical students than in a neutral setting. Anne is more feminine than John in the neutral setting but equally masculine as a medical student. However, Anne's success is not regarded as maladaptive, but "competent". Clearly Horner's cue reflects stereotypes; a more ambiguous cue might assess motives more effectively. (Author)

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Stereotyping in Fear of Success Cues*

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A Measure of Stereotyping in Fear of Success Cues

The present research examines the validity of the projective assessment of Fear of Success (FOS) as a measure of an individual's "motive to avoid success." Results that have been obtained using Horner's (1968) verbal cue are questioned on the basis of the specificity of the cue. As cues become less ambiguous, the interpretation of responses as "projective" becomes more questionable.

According to Horner (1968) the "motive to avoid success" is a relatively stable personality disposition internalized in childhood in conjunction with a person's achievement motivation, and is conceptualized as an individual's fear of the consequences of successful achievement. For women it is based on the stereotypic assumption that femininity and successful achievement are mutually exclusive. Women in whom the motive to avoid success is strong are presumably concerned with the masculine and aggressive consequences (including social rejection) of successful achievement.

Horner's (1968) original data revealed substantially more fear of success imagery in stories written by females than in stories written by males about a subject of their own sex in an achievement situation. Horner's cue was: "After first term finals, John (Anne) finds himself (herself) at the top of his (her) medical school class." The scores obtained were assumed to reflect individual motives.

The following question may be raised with respect to Horner's procedure. Since her cue was highly specific, rather than ambiguous as is

normally the case with a projective measure, may it not have elicited stereotyped responses about the kinds of behavior expected in the medical school situation? Two kinds of stereotypes may have been permitted expression, one having to do with the behavior of persons in medical school settings, and the other having to do with male and female roles.

Recent studies that have employed a cross-sex design using Horner's cue (Feather & Raphelson, 1974; Monahan, Kuhn & Shaver, 1974; Robbins & Robbins, 1973) show that the sex of the cue character in the situation affects the results. The Anne cue typically elicits more FOS imagery, especially from males. These studies suggest that Horner's results may reflect, at least in part, the operation of sex-role stereotypes concerning the differential consequences of success for men and women in this setting.

What these studies do not investigate is the effect of stereotypic expectations about the medical school setting compared with other settings, and the interaction of these expectations with sex-role stereotypes. The present study examines this question by employing a cross-sex design that contrasts the effects of the Horner cue with those of a neutral cue. It was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between cue sex and cue situation such that Anne and John would be seen as more stereotypically different in a "neutral" than in the "medical school" or FOS situation. That is, it was expected that Anne would be seen as more feminine than John in a neutral situation but that this difference would be

reduced in the medical school situation. The dependent measure is not the amount of fear of success imagery elicited in each condition, but a measure of the perceived masculinity-feminity of the story characters.

Method

Subjects

The subjects were 160 introductory psychology students (108 females and 52 males) ranging in age from 17 to 25 years and drawn from a subject pool at a municipal college in New York City. Males and females were tested together (in whatever seats they had chosen) in one of two large lecture halls.

Design and Scoring

Subjects were randomly assigned to four conditions, with equal numbers of each sex in each condition. The four conditions were comprised of four verbal cues: Anne or John in a neutral or medical school situation. Horner's original cue was used for the medical school (FOS) situation. For the neutral situation, a more ambiguous cue was used: Anne (John) is sitting on a chair with a smile on her (his) face. (These cues were used by Horner in her original study and by Tresemer (1974)).

Each subject received a booklet with the standard thematic apperceptive instructions (cf. McClelland, Atkinson, Clark and Lowell, 1953, p. 98) modified slightly for verbal cues on the cover. The booklets varied according to conditions on the second page, which presented the particular verbal cue for that condition. After writing a story about Anne

or John in the neutral or medical school situation, the subjects were asked to turn the page and to rate the person about whom they had written on a seven-point scale for each of 41 characteristics. The first 38 of these were identical to the bi-polar adjectives in the Broverman, Vogel, Broverman, Clarkson and Rosenkrantz (1970) list of stereotypic items. The mean of these 38 items comprised the masculinity-femininity score. (Each item, as well as having a masculine and feminine pole, was rated for social desirability in the Broverman et al. research.) Three additional traits (worried about sexual relations; functioning adquately in future job; functioning adequately in future family situation) were added by the present author to check certain "maladaptive" consequences of success which were evidenced in many of the stories described by Horner. The 41 traits are listed in Tables 2 and 3.

Results

The major analysis examines effects on the masculinity-femininity score. A 2 x 2 x 2 analysis of variance (sex of subject, cue sex, cue situation) reveals the predicted interaction between cue sex and cue situation. ($F = 6.40$; $df = 1/151$; $p < .02$.) The means for this analysis, presented in Table 1, show that for male and female subjects combined, John and Anne are seen as more stereotypically differentiated in the neutral than in the medical school setting. In the neutral setting Anne (mean = 4.17) is seen as clearly more feminine than John (mean = 3.76). This difference is significant ($t = 3.1$; $df = 78$; $p < .005$). However, in the

medical school setting there is no difference in perceived masculinity-femininity between John (mean = 3.62) and Anne (mean = 3.56). In fact, Anne is now seen as slightly more masculine than John. These results are graphically represented in figure 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

Insert Figure 1 about here

The analysis shows a significant main effect for the cue settings ($F = 16.5$; $df = 1/151$; $p < .001$) with both characters seen as significantly more masculine in the medical school setting than in the neutral setting. Main effects for sex of subject and cue sex are not significant.

An analysis of scores for individual traits (see Table 2) reveals the following significant (i.e. $p < .05$) differences between the two cue situations for male and female subjects combined. Anne, in the medical school setting, as compared with the neutral setting, is seen as significantly more competitive, non-crying, ambitious, self-confident, active, dominant, and as more of a leader. She is seen as significantly less dependent, emotionally hurt, or excitable in a minor crisis. Additionally, she enjoys math and science more, and art and literature less. In all

of these traits she becomes more "masculine," and in all except one instance, (when she enjoys art and literature less), more socially desirable, according to the ratings obtained by Broverman et al. (1970).

Ratings of John, for male and female subjects combined, change on only six traits across situations. In the medical school setting he is seen as more competitive, objective, ambitious, neat, logical, and also as enjoying math and science more than in the neutral setting. The Anne and John of the medical school setting are both rated as functioning more adequately in their future jobs as compared with the neutral situation.

The traits "aggressive" (No. 11) and "discomfort about being aggressive" (No. 30) are especially relevant, since fear about the "aggressive" overtones of successful achievement was a major theoretical component of the original Fear of Success construct, as discussed by Horner. In the present data, there is <u>no</u> significant difference in the extent to which Anne is rated as "aggressive" or "uncomfortable about being aggressive" either between situations, or between male and female subjects, and the combined male and female ratings of Anne on both traits are relatively neutral. An analysis of variance comparing conditions and sex of subject for the Anne cue only reveals no significant interaction for the term "aggressive"; however, the interaction does become significant when responses to both the Anne and John cue are included. Males rate

John and Anne as becoming more aggressive in medical school (as compared to the neutral situation), while females see their aggression as decreasing.

Discussion

The results provide clear evidence that Horner's original FOS cue elicits stereotyped assumptions about the kinds of persons who are successful in medical school. The expression of stereotypic responses to Horner's cue may interfere with or obscure the projective expression of individual differences in motivation to avoid success. However, some of the individual differences in response to the Horner cue may be due to individual differences in motivation. The extent to which a response reflects a stereotype, an individual's motive, or both is yet to be determined. The present study suggests that the type of cue employed may affect the meaning of an individual's response in a highly important way. A more ambiguous cue might more affectively assess differences in motive strength.

The fact that there are different stereotypic assumptions about males and females in different achievement settings has some interesting implications. Overall differences between John and Anne in masculinity-femininity occur in the neutral setting but not in the medical school setting. There Anne is conceived of as being just as masculine as John if not more so.

Does a woman pay a price for being seen as "masculine" in this way? The combined data do not suggest this. For one thing, the vast majority of qualities attributed to Anne, the medical student, are socially desirable. She is seen as self-confident, a leader, and so forth, but she is not seen as particularly aggressive or as worried about sexual relations. She is seen as functioning adequately in a future job and family situation. In short, these ratings do not appear to reflect the "fear of success" assumption that success is detrimental to Anne since she is, on the whole rated more positively in the medical school setting than in the neutral situation. This suggests that women in high achievement or traditionally male positions are no longer viewed as "unfeminine" in a socially undesirable way. Their unfemininity is akin to "competency," a traditionally male cluster of characteristics.

Those are the results for males and females combined. When the data are examined for each sex separately, some provocative patterns emerge. For example, the different responses of males and females on the trait "aggressive" suggest that this term has different meanings for the sexes, at least in response to the given cues. Perhaps "aggressive," for males, means acting "assertively" in order to become a top medical student, whereas for females it implies a "hardness" which

decreases in the same situation. In any case, females are not particularly concerned about Anne's "aggression" or "discomfort about aggression" in medical school.

Another interesting finding concerns the ratings of the cue character on the term "dependent," (the poles of which were "not at all dependent" and "very dependent"). "Dependency" shows one of the biggest male/female differences in ratings of Anne in medical school ($t = 1.98$; $.05 < p < .10$). Males find small or no differences between situations for Anne and John on this trait; however, females see significant differences between situations for both John and Anne, with decreasing dependency in medical school (see figure 2). Perhaps "fear of loss of dependency" underlies certain success-related anxieties in women.

The trait "functioning adequately in future family situation" reveals another interesting trend. Of the four male/female/Anne/John situations, females rating Anne show the only increase from the neutral to medical school condition with Anne becoming <u>less</u> positive in this trait (see figure 3). This may be a clue about a <u>realistic</u> success-related anxiety (as opposed to a maladaptive internalized fear) operating in women today. The dual role of raising a family and having a career involves realistic difficulties; this is especially true for women, who still have the major responsibility for child-care.

Finally, this study suggests the possibility that current sex-roles may be becoming more flexible. In the neutral situation, Anne and John show considerable overlap on a variety of traits, with Anne possessing a number of "competency" traits and John, a number of "warmth-expressiveness" or female-valued characteristics. If stereotypes begin to overlap and eventually coincide, motives and behaviors associated with enhancing or diminishing one's femininity or masculinity would become meaningless. Specifically "feminine" fears would, hopefully, cease to exist.

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Table 1

Means and Standard Deviations of Overall Sex-Role Stereotype Ratings of John and Anne for Neutral and Medical School Cues

Ss[a]	John		Anne	
Neutral Cues	M	SD	M	SD
Male	3.70	.61	4.00	.78
Female	3.79	.54	4.26	.64
Combined	3.76	.56	4.17	.69
Medical School Cues				
Male	3.52	.36	3.39	.55
Female	3.67	.57	3.64	.63
Combined	3.62	.51	3.56	.61

Note. Scores were obtained from the 38 items of the Broverman et al. (1970) sex-role stereotype scale. Each subject's score was the mean of the 38 items. Tables entries are the means of the subjects' scores. 1 is the masculine pole, 7 is the feminine pole.

[a]n = 13 males and 27 females in each condition.

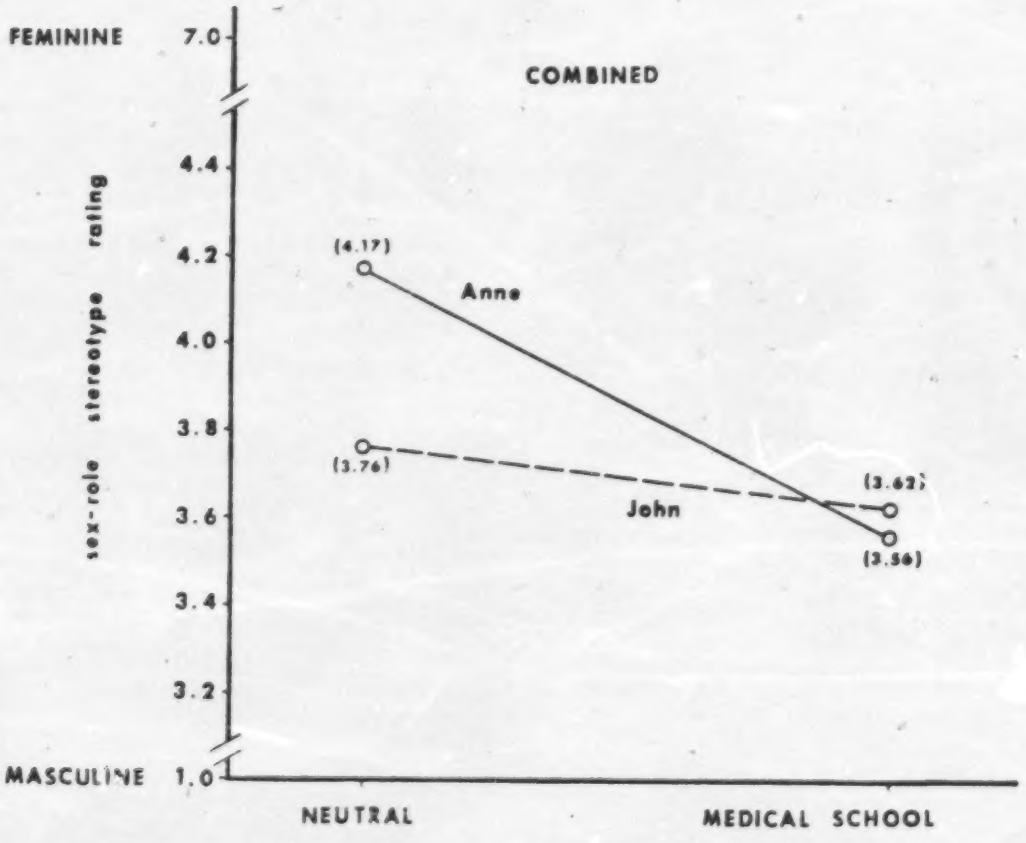

Figure 1: Combined overall sex-role stereotype ratings of John and Anne.

Table 2

Mean Combined Sex-Role Stereotype Ratings of Anne and John in the Neutral (N) and Medical School (MS) Situations

Traits	Anne			John		
	N	Combined MS	t	N	Combined MS	t
1. Very Competitive**	3.45	1.90	5.04*	3.03	1.93	3.01*
2. Not at all easily influenced**	3.90	3.63	0.62	3.78	3.08	1.64
3. Not at all interested in own appearance	4.40	4.43	-0.06	4.48	4.70	-0.49
4. Not at all dependent**	4.43	3.43	2.35*	4.25	3.45	1.79
5. Never cries**	4.48	3.58	2.27*	3.15	3.68	-1.16
6. Not at all talkative	4.38	4.38	0.00	4.28	4.38	-0.23
7. Never conceited about appearance**	3.15	3.28	-0.35	3.50	4.10	-1.49
8. Not at all aware of feelings of others	5.28	5.03	0.58	4.53	5.00	-1.02
9. Very little need for security	5.03	4.83	0.50	4.73	5.08	-0.91
10. Very direct**	2.88	2.65	0.58	3.23	2.80	0.94
11. Very aggressive**	3.53	3.40	0.30	2.85	3.03	-0.46
12. Very objective**	4.20	3.48	1.87	4.28	3.40	1.98*
13. Very worldly	4.23	3.45	1.83	3.85	3.75	0.22
14. Does not express tender feelings at all	4.95	4.83	0.33	4.55	4.65	-0.25
15. Easily able to separate feelings from ideas**	3.58	2.85	1.73	3.85	3.25	1.40
16. Very rough	5.68	5.00	1.85	4.70	4.83	-0.33
17. Very ambitious**	2.98	1.43	4.66*	2.70	1.55	3.31*
18. Very self-confident**	3.40	2.30	2.80*	2.63	2.68	-0.12
19. Knows the way of the world**	3.75	3.20	1.50	3.45	3.25	0.57
20. Can make decisions easily**	3.18	3.00	0.43	3.13	2.98	0.35
21. Not at all emotional**	5.20	4.88	0.81	4.45	4.23	0.57
22. Very loud	4.95	4.28	1.89	4.78	4.45	0.89
23. Very blunt	4.08	4.75	-1.92	4.13	4.48	-0.87
24. Almost always acts as a leader**	4.35	3.43	2.28*	4.10	3.53	1.38

(Continued)

Table 2 (Continued)

Traits	Anne Combined N	Anne Combined MS	Anne t	John Combined N	John Combined MS	John t
25. Very adventurous**	3.03	2.83	0.56	2.73	2.80	-0.20
26. Very independent**	3.15	2.70	1.12	2.78	2.40	1.07
27. Almost always hides emotions**	4.78	4.18	1.51	4.48	3.90	1.56
28. Very sloppy in habits	5.33	5.45	-0.37	4.80	5.68	-2.46*
29. Does not enjoy art and literature at all	5.13	4.10	2.54*	4.38	5.08	-1.66
30. Not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive**	3.93	3.93	0.00	3.58	3.78	-0.47
31. Feelings not easily hurt**	5.30	4.30	2.68*	3.98	4.35	-0.94
32. Very skilled in business**	4.78	3.43	3.71*	3.63	3.45	0.45
33. Very logical**	3.15	2.35	2.14*	3.13	2.13	2.60*
34. Very active**	3.55	2.43	2.80*	3.00	3.10	-0.23
35. Likes math and science very much**	4.33	1.98	5.42*	3.70	1.85	4.57*
36. Not at all religious	3.60	3.58	0.07	3.55	4.18	-1.73
37. Not at all excitable in a miner crisis**	4.70	3.28	3.16*	3.45	3.25	0.43
38. Very dominant**	4.30	3.23	2.99*	3.48	3.33	0.40
39. Not worried about sexual relations***	3.88	4.05	-0.39	3.73	2.98	1.74
40. Functioning adequately in future job***	2.88	2.05	2.07*	2.93	1.88	2.94*
41. Functioning adequately in future family situation***	2.40	2.78	-0.95	3.30	2.95	0.78

Note. The male pole of each trait is labelled.
*Statistically significant at the .05 level.
**The socially desirable pole.
***Additional traits added by the present author.

Table 3

Mean Male and Female Sex-Role Stereotype Ratings of Anne and John in the Neutral (N) and Medical School (MS) Situations

	Anne						John					
	Males			Females			Males			Females		
Traits	N	MS	t	N	MS	t	N	MS	t	N	MS	t
1. Very Competitive**	3.00	1.62	2.77*	3.67	2.04	4.26*	3.08	1.92	1.75	3.00	1.93	2.41*
2. Not at all easily influenced**	3.38	3.46	-0.11	4.15	3.70	0.80	3.31	3.23	0.10	4.00	3.00	1.97*
3. Not at all interested in own appearance	4.15	4.31	-0.19	4.52	4.48	0.07	4.54	4.77	-0.30	4.44	4.67	-0.38
4. Not at all dependent**	4.62	4.31	0.37	4.33	3.00	2.83*	3.46	3.46	0.00	4.63	3.44	2.26*
5. Never cries**	4.23	2.69	2.42*	4.59	4.00	1.22	3.15	4.61	-1.86	3.15	3.22	-0.14
6. Not at all talkative	3.77	5.00	-1.72	4.67	4.07	1.13	3.46	4.08	-0.82	4.67	4.52	0.28
7. Never conceited about appearance**	3.15	3.08	0.12	3.15	3.37	-0.51	2.77	4.69	-2.81*	3.85	3.81	0.08
8. Not at all aware of feelings of others	4.15	4.92	-1.03	5.81	5.07	1.47	4.92	4.62	-0.38	4.33	5.19	-1.49
9. Very little need for security	4.38	5.00	-0.92	5.33	4.74	1.19	4.46	5.08	-0.78	4.85	5.07	-0.51
10. Very direct**	3.31	2.38	1.36	2.67	2.78	-0.24	3.39	2.92	0.55	3.15	2.74	0.74
11. Very aggressive**	3.62	2.69	1.12	3.48	3.74	-0.54	3.69	2.69	1.44	2.44	3.19	-1.72
12. Very objective**	3.77	2.54	1.82	4.41	3.93	1.07	2.85	3.31	-0.55	4.96	3.44	3.23*
13. Very worldly**	4.23	4.15	0.11	4.22	3.11	2.14*	4.38	3.92	0.55	3.59	3.67	-0.14
14. Does not express tender feelings at all	4.46	4.31	0.25	5.19	5.07	0.23	4.62	4.46	0.22	4.52	4.74	-0.45
15. Easily able to separate feelings from ideas**	3.77	2.38	2.08*	3.48	3.07	0.77	3.54	3.23	0.39	4.00	3.26	1.44
16. Very rough	4.54	4.77	-0.34	6.22	5.11	2.84*	4.62	4.69	-0.13	4.74	4.89	-0.31
17. Very ambitious**	2.62	1.38	2.71*	3.15	1.44	3.84*	2.23	1.15	1.98	2.93	1.74	2.70*
18. Very self-confident**	3.77	2.00	2.89*	3.22	2.44	1.55	2.46	2.92	-0.61	2.70	2.56	0.28
19. Knows the way of the world**	4.08	2.77	2.16*	3.59	3.41	0.40	2.85	3.69	-1.14	3.74	3.04	1.94
20. Can make decisions easily**	3.54	3.15	0.56	3.00	2.93	0.14	2.23	3.31	-1.53	3.56	2.81	1.41

(Continued)

Table 3 (Continued)

Traits	Anne						John					
	Males			Females			Males			Females		
	N	MS	t	N	MS	t	N	MS	t	N	MS	t
21. Not at all emotional**	4.54	4.85	-0.44	5.52	4.89	1.30	4.92	3.85	1.54	4.22	4.41	-0.39
22. Very loud	4.92	4.23	1.16	4.96	4.30	1.47	5.62	4.08	2.33*	4.37	4.63	-0.62
23. Very blunt	4.08	4.77	-1.09	4.07	4.74	-1.55	4.08	3.92	0.22	4.15	4.74	-1.20
24. Almost always acts as a leader**	4.54	2.77	2.26*	4.26	3.74	1.11	4.92	3.15	2.18*	3.70	3.70	0.00
25. Very adventurous**	2.77	2.69	0.12	3.15	2.89	0.59	2.46	2.31	0.27	2.85	3.04	-0.39
26. Very independent**	3.38	2.77	0.98	3.04	2.67	0.71	2.77	2.46	0.46	2.78	2.37	0.97
27. Almost always hides emotions**	4.38	4.38	0.00	4.96	4.07	1.87	4.15	2.92	1.63	4.63	4.37	0.68
28. Very sloppy in habits	4.92	5.00	-0.12	5.52	5.67	-0.39	5.08	5.77	-1.21	4.67	5.63	-2.12*
29. Does not enjoy art and literature at all	3.92	3.85	0.12	5.70	4.22	3.14*	5.15	4.54	0.81	4.00	5.32	-2.73*
30. Not at all uncomfortable about being aggressive**	3.62	3.31	0.40	4.07	4.22	-0.27	4.00	3.54	0.64	3.37	3.89	-0.98
31. Feelings not easily hurt**	4.62	3.38	1.95	5.63	4.74	2.07*	4.23	4.08	0.21	3.85	4.48	-1.33
32. Very skilled in business**	4.54	3.77	1.34	4.89	3.26	3.50*	3.46	3.62	-0.23	3.70	3.37	0.70
33. Very logical**	3.15	2.46	1.03	3.15	2.30	1.86	2.62	2.23	0.57	3.37	2.07	2.77*
34. Very active**	4.15	2.00	3.09*	3.26	2.63	1.30	3.46	3.23	0.28	2.78	3.04	-0.52
35. Likes math and science very much**	4.31	2.38	2.31*	4.33	1.78	5.01*	3.38	1.85	2.06*	3.85	1.85	4.10*
36. Not at all religious	3.69	3.38	0.48	3.56	3.67	-0.24	3.85	4.15	-0.61	3.41	4.19	-1.52
37. Not at all excitable in a minor crisis**	4.92	3.15	2.16*	4.60	3.33	2.30*	2.62	2.46	0.21	3.85	3.63	0.39
38. Very dominant**	4.23	2.61	2.71*	4.33	3.52	1.83	4.00	2.77	1.86	3.22	3.59	-0.83
39. Not worried about sexual relations***	3.92	3.54	0.56	3.85	4.30	-0.78	3.85	2.92	1.13	3.67	3.00	1.30
40. Functioning adequately in future job***	3.85	2.23	2.15*	2.41	1.97	0.99	2.77	1.62	2.19*	3.00	2.00	2.14*
41. Functioning adequately in future family situation***	3.08	2.85	0.31	2.08	2.74	-1.47	3.08	2.54	0.77	3.41	3.15	0.45

Note. The male pole of each item is labelled.
**The socially desirable pole.
*Statistically significant at the .05 level.
***Additional traits added by the present author.

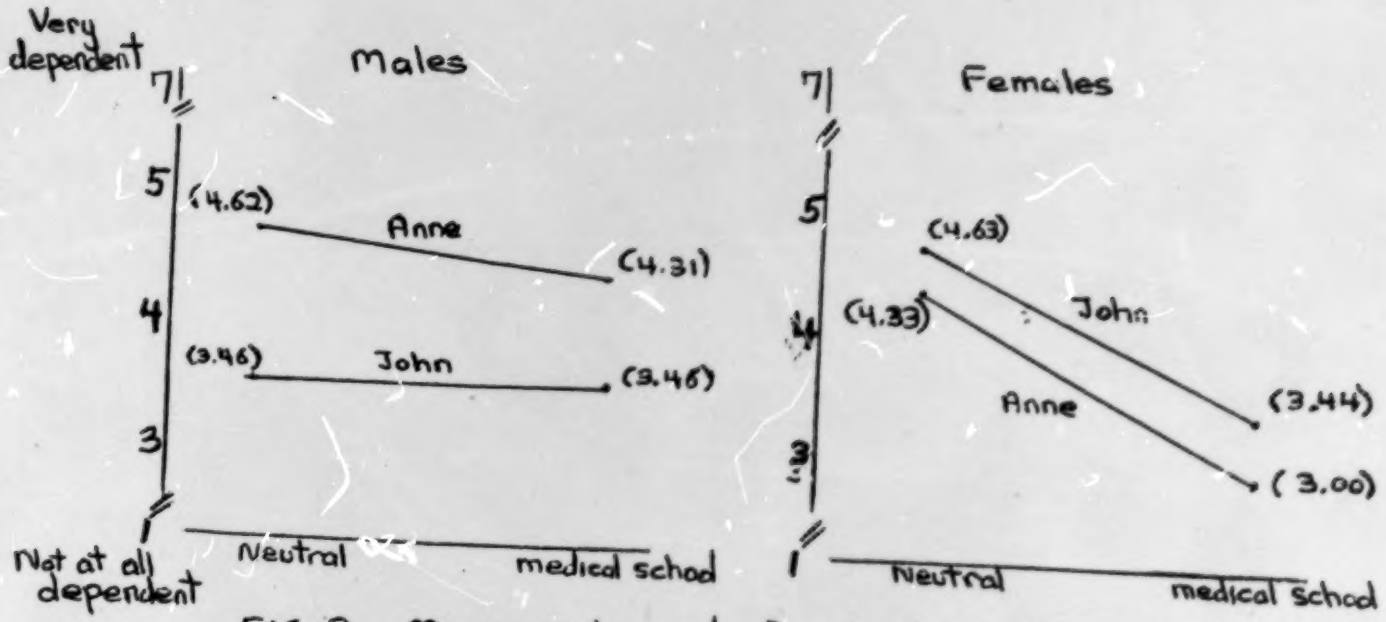

FIG. 2 Mean male and female sex-role stereotype ratings of John and Anne on "dependency"

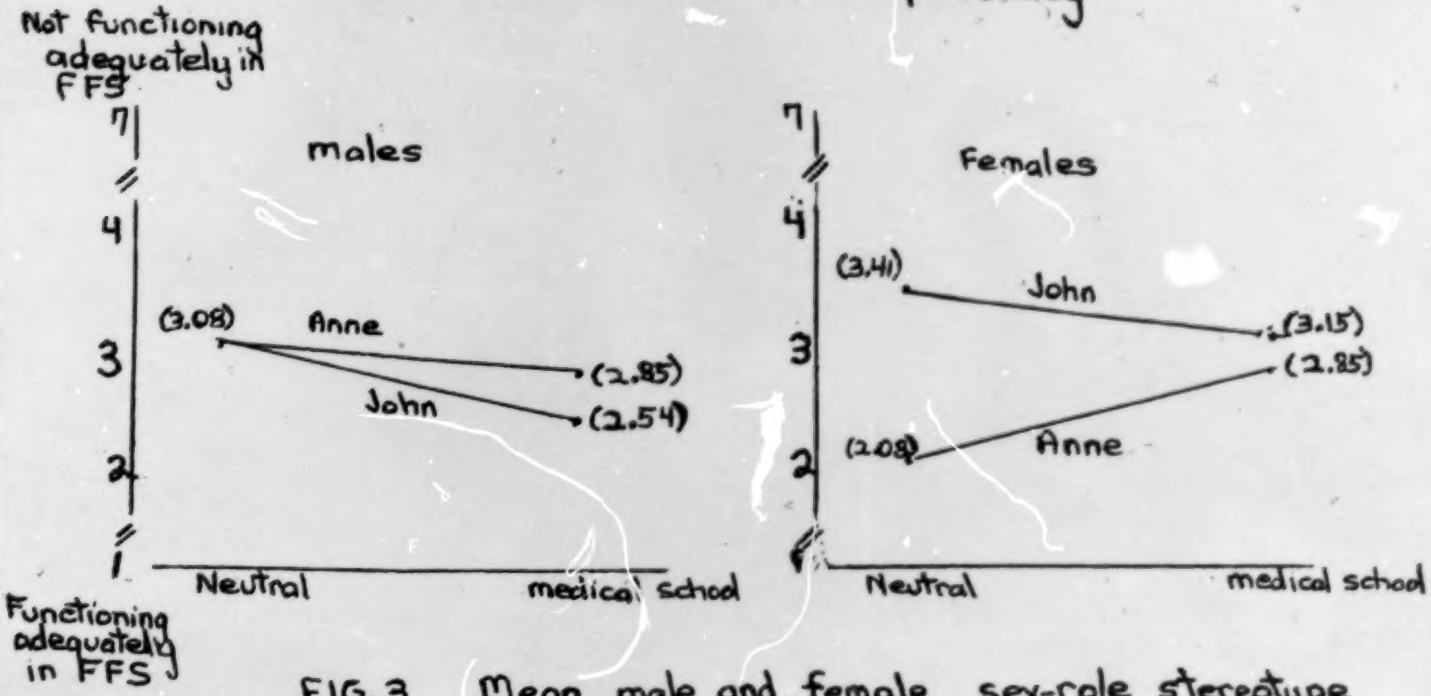

FIG. 3 Mean male and female sex-role stereotype ratings of John and Anne in "future family situation" (FFS)